

CHAPTER 1

"Police! Freeze!"

I stepped out of the manager's office in the Gino restaurant stakeout and saw the bastard with his right hand in the till and his left hand holding the gun. Damn if he didn't get off a lucky shot with the wrong hand and I felt the stinging of the pellet just under my chin, in the neck. Hell, I didn't even know I was hurt at first; I just felt numb. The bullet went in clean and came out the back of my head, but still I managed to pump three shots into the bum, shooting from the hip out of my 357 magnum, "the gun all stake-out men carry in a shoulder holster.

A regular magnum bullet could damage a good sized engine block of any car on the street, but actually, the bullets used in this gun are the standard 38 caliber, with just a little extra powder added because the recoil from a regular magnum bullet would hamper direct aim.

The damned jitterbug spun around, firing all his shots wildly, as my partner, Robert Szafranski, right behind me, emptied his five shots into the tall, skinny, young black and he went down hard.

"You're bleeding," said the waitress as she threw me a towel.

I caught the towel, pressed it to the back of my head and was amazed to see it come away all bloody, but I didn't feel a thing even then.

My usual inner voice hadn't warned me that afternoon at Gino's as it had the night I almost got the butcher knife stuck in my gut. I'd known, sure as hell, that was going to happen. It went down just as I figured it would, but I was lucky. I was lucky this time too, because if that motherfucker had had the gun in his right hand, I could have ended up dead.

It started out like any other stake-out, the eight hour 4:00 P.M. until midnight. After eighteen years on the force, I had seen too much action to worry about a routine case like this one.

Bob and I dressed in old denims and flannel work shirts, sauntered in, casually, one at a time, flipped our I.D.'s for Fulton, the manager who had been expecting us.

"Mighty glad to see you fellas," he said. "These bums come in here every time they passes and they acts like they owns the joint. They just help themselves from the register and ain't nothing we c'n d o 'bout it."

"Same guys all the time?" I asked.

"Nope, always different, and they ain't from around here."

"Black or white?"

"Always black."

"O.K., nothing to worry about. This time we'll get them."

CHAPTER 1

I was confident as hell, and why not? Hadn't I been just about the best stake-out man the department ever had? Hadn't I been with stake-out since its very beginning in nineteen sixty-four when Police Commissioners Howard Leary and Ed Bell gave their O.K. to an official force for undercover work? Even after Howard Leary went to New York two years later on a personal invite from Mayor Lindsay to be his white haired boy, in that city, stake-out in Philadelphia thrived and flourished Wasn't I the very first "Granny Cop" in the whole country? It was his idea, Captain Al Giordano's, in nineteen sixty-seven, but it was me, James McGrath, who volunteered to be the decoy - the first "Granny" to walk the dark streets in the bad neighborhoods; a man dressed up like an old lady to get the muggers who were preying, like vultures, on elderly women who couldn't defend themselves.

So that was how it started, that day, October tenth, nineteen seventy-three at Gino's at Fifty-Seventh and Walnut. The place had been hit at least ten times in the past three months and we had to put a stop to it. My only worry was that it was a black neighborhood and all the employees were also black. We figured there might be a tip-off from one of the workers to the cats in the vicinity, but we had to chance that.

Bob and I sat in Fulton's office taking turns watching the ball game on a small T.V. set. "You and Cass celebrate yesterday? Gosh, twenty-seven years with one woman," said Bob. "Twenty-seven years isn't a long time with a woman like Cass," I said, "best cop's wife in the world. Nah, we didn't do anything special. I'm taking her out on Saturday night. We'll go to a fancy place and have dinner."

"Look at that Luzinski, he almost hit one out of the ball park."

"Yea, yea, he can hit, but say, Bob, you know what? We can't really see the whole store from here. That cash register isn't in plain sight. What we need is to rig up a mirror so that we can see the entire area."

Bob agreed with me, so we asked Fulton if he would mind going down the street to a glass and mirror place to buy something we could use. Once on stake-out, we couldn't leave to do it ourselves, so he obliged us by going. Before Fulton got back with the mirror, I saw one of the waitresses come nearer my doorway and nodded her head, "yes". This had been our pre-arranged signal if anything was going on in the store, but we hadn't even been in the place for ten minutes. I just didn't know what to expect when I walked out, stood about four feet from the nigger and caught the bullet.

I heard Szafranski give a yell and, would you believe it, that black creep with eight slugs in him was snaking on his belly right out of the door, leaving a trail of blood that could make you vomit.

Bob caught the bastard on the sidewalk and put the cuffs on him while I reached police radio by phone.

By the time Fulton got back with the mirror it was all over and the place was swarming with police. He said it looked like a "Wild Bill Hickock shootout after the gun-fight".

I guess I got woozy then, and went down. I remember them getting me on a stretcher and I was in a police emergency wagon with two officers to assist me as we tore across the few blocks to Fifty-Fourth and Cedar - the Misericordia Hospital.

That was the way Jim described it to me, five years later over an Irish whiskey, speaking in a way that was almost detached, as if he were standing apart from the drama which had unfolded that Wednesday, October ninth, nineteen seventy-three.

CHAPTER 1

James McGrath was fifty-two years old when we met, and retired from the police department for twenty-four months; a virile man whose light brown hair had turned white, combed back from his forehead in thick waves. His face is round and ruddy with a short neck set on shoulders too broad for his average height and weight. His eyes are as blue as the lakes of Ireland, and nothing escapes his notice. He walks with a rolling gait, much as a sailor does, on the balls of his feet, lightly, alert and aware with an attitude of expectation -something of an extra-sensory perception which comes of being so long on stake-out. He wore a red shirt and navy blue trousers, but the spit and polish of his black shoes gave him away, along with trim barbering which revealed him as the cop he had been, and at heart, will always remain. He is still the man an entire city admired and envied - a little, for who wouldn't want to be a star in the most thrilling, cops and robbers game in town; dressing up everyday as if for an unending Halloween party. In Jim's own words, "How else could a grown-up man have so much fun?"

When Jim was shot he was patrolman James McGrath, badge number 4620, but to the people of Philadelphia, he was "The Granny Cop." As soon as he got to the emergency entrance of the hospital, about 4:15, a tremendous crowd of police, reporters and curious on-lookers had arrived.

He was rolled at first on the stretcher to the large room where the only privacy was to be had by pulling curtains around the cubicles.

Ironically, in the next cubicle lay Larry Brown, twenty-three-year-old suspect in the shooting.

Dr. Edward McLaughlin, chief of surgery, personally attended Jim. McLaughlin was a respected surgeon, a man in his middle fifties, with gray hair and kind eyes who inspired confidence. He took immediate charge of the situation and probed the hole where the bullet had entered. He was amazed, at first examination, to find that there appeared to be no impairment of any vital organs.

"Well," he said, "Not even a tooth out of Place. I guess it's the 'luck of the Irish' all right. But to be really sure, we'll run an arteriogram. It's really nothing Jim, just shooting some dye so that we can take X-rays and be sure that we'll have no problems later on. Don't try to talk and we'll take care of everything."

Jim lay on a stretcher, intravenous feeding into his right hand, and blood plasma trickling into his left arm while they cleaned and bandaged the wound.



POLICE COMMISSIONER Joseph O'Neill and Mayor Rizzo talk to McGrath, the original "granny" stakeout policeman, in the hospital.

It was hardly ten minutes after his arrival at the hospital when Mayor Frank L. Rizzo, former Police Chief of Philadelphia, left a press conference and hurried, with Commissioner Joseph O'Neill to Jim's bedside.

"I could see that Rizzo was pissed-off," said Jim later, "the way he always gets when something like this happens."

Frank Rizzo, former Police Commissioner, of Philadelphia had, in his eyes, the dangerous look of "The Cisco Kid," a name attached to him in his younger days when the rumor was that he carried two guns and could shoot simultaneously with both hands. Now, immaculate in his pin-striped suit and polka dot tie, he leaned

CHAPTER 1

over. "How you doing, Jim?" asked Rizzo, "How do you feel?"

Jim tried to answer, but was cautioned by the nurse not to try to speak. He just nodded.

"Tell it like it is, Jim; when the time comes, just tell it like it is."

Rizzo put a hand on Jim's shoulder and Jim was filled with warmth. He loved the man. Joe O'Neill bent down and murmured, "Just like the old days in South Philly, Jimmy; cops and robbers - for real."

He was sorry he was not able to answer. He wanted to say that it had all been worthwhile - the muggings, the beatings, the danger and now, the bullet. It had all been worthwhile because he was part of the team, and they were all members of a select club who would never let each other down.

Catherine McGrath, a petite lady, hardly five feet tall and less than a hundred pounds with platinum hair and blue eyes, doesn't look old enough to be a proud grandmother and outwardly, never displays the raw courage and iron control which it takes to be the wife of a man like Jim McGrath. Cass, as she is called by her friends and relatives, has a sweet face, a lovely smile and is devoted heart and soul to her church and her family.

On October tenth, nineteen seventy-three, one day after her twenty-seventh wedding anniversary, Cass felt uneasy. It is not unusual, after eighteen years, for a police wife to have intuitive feelings about her husband's safety, but on this particular Wednesday, Cass could not calm herself either by reading or talking to her sisters, Theresa and Helen, with whom she maintains a close relationship. She once jokingly remarked that they always knew when Jim was on dangerous assignments because their telephone bills were so high that month from Cass talking for hours to Theresa, who lives in New Jersey.

About four o'clock on that Wednesday afternoon, unable to endure the house and her thoughts any longer, Cass went for a walk, but she did not wander aimlessly. Her destination was St. Martin of Tours, for she knew that just the sight of the gray stone facade of the church would have a calming effect on her. As she reached the wide expanse of Roosevelt Boulevard, she could see the edifice dimly outlined in the distance. She was reminded of the day their younger son Gregory had taken his first communion there. It was a special event for Archbishop Kroll, now Cardinal Kroll, had officiated and also, twelve members of the Knights of Columbus in full regalia with plumed hats stood at attention, making that day the most memorable since her wedding to Jim.

As she approached the church, one of her neighbors, who had guessed where she had gone and followed her, stopped Cass and told her gently the chilling news which had been broadcast on all the news media. A cruising police car stopped for her, radioed their elder son, James (Mickey) McGrath, Jr., on duty with the highway patrol and picked up Gregory at home. Off they dashed, sirens screaming, to Misericordia Hospital where Cass and the boys were able to see Jim after a path was cleared for them. The area was deep in crowds, the curious the friendly and the ones who hated. Jim felt better when Cass pressed his hand between her two tiny ones and murmured soothingly to him.

"Don't worry, Jimmy," she said, "we're with you and we'll stay - me and the boys. Take it easy and Just don't worry."

Jim did not answer her, because he had been warned not to speak. Dr. McLaughlin suspected that perhaps Jim's vocal chords or voice box had been damaged and he might never speak normally again.

CHAPTER 1

Catherine was very upset, but her sons were with her and her sisters were waiting in the hall to comfort her. They were all taken to a small waiting room where they would not be disturbed while Jim was undergoing his tests.

The halls were so mobbed that it was difficult for the police to hold back the crowds and allow the stretcher to be trundled down the corridor.

Dr. McLaughlin had ordered a cerebral arteriogram, the injection of a chemical dye so that the X-rays of the brain could be more easily visualized. If there had been any cerebral damage from either the entrance of the bullet into Jim's neck, or its exit at the back of the head, this procedure would leave no doubt of the entire picture. The arteriogram, Jim recalls, was worse than being shot, for a small cut was made in the groin to allow the tube of dye to be introduced into the body. The cut was made into the left side, but there was a stoppage and they could not proceed, so the right side was cut and Jim experienced "a hot flash from head to toe."



MRS. JAMES McGRATH, wife of wounded Policeman James McGrath, is escorted into Misericordia Hospital by her son, James Jr., also an officer.

After the tests, Jim was taken to intensive care, sedated, and he slept while a stake-out man was posted outside the door. The hospital switchboard was a nightmare for the personnel and the police managed to disperse most of the thrill-seekers, allowing only friends and family to remain.

There was a problem which was a closely-guarded secret, for along with the calls of well-wishers had come threats on Jim's life.

Some of these threats had come by phone and some were printed circulars, pasted with words cut from papers and magazines and somehow smuggled into the hospital mail. One was scrawled with the message, "DIE, DIE YOU BASTARD GRANNY, YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE THE HOSPITAL ALIVE;

As Jim dreamed in his narcotic-induced slumber, his wife and family were guarded in the small room where they waited for news of the X-rays.

The police took the threatening messages and tried to get a lead. Mostly cranks, they concluded, but there might be a real danger of retaliation resulting from any one of more than a hundred convictions for which Jim had been personally responsible.

That first night was the worst Jim had ever spent. The pain in his throat, the cuts in his groin, the discomfort of the intravenous in his hand and the terrible thirst which could not be slaked until Dr. McLaughlin gave his permission, almost drove him mad. He could not speak, he ached for a cup of coffee, a cigarette, just one puff of a lucky strike; anything which would ease the torment. The nurses kindly rearranged his pillows and the sisters moistened his lips with water to keep them from cracking; it was the best they could do.

CHAPTER 1

He was glad to be in a Catholic hospital. The whispering habits of the nuns were comforting, reminding him of his far-off school days. Finally, he drifted off to sleep again.

Helen and Theresa went home to their families, but Catherine and the boys stayed on until midnight. Then there was nothing to do but be taken back in one of the waiting police cars. Mickey kissed his mother and went home to his wife, June and their two children. Greg stayed with his mother, but Cass did not sleep. She paced the floor for the rest of the night and prayed, no formal rosaries, no candles, but just deep within her, one prayer over and over like a new litany, God, don't let anything bad happen to my Jimmy, God keep him safe, don't let him lose his voice, sweet Jesus, watch over my husband.

Jim remained in intensive care for twenty-four hours, and when they moved him to his own private room, there was a stake-out man with him and a uniformed man posted outside the door. There was absolute security within the hospital, and all personnel was alerted to watch for any strangers or unusual activity. The threats upon Jim's life had become ominous, and though nothing had been mentioned to Cass or Jim, Mickey was advised of the situation.

Dr. McLaughlin, busy chief of surgery in a teeming mid-city hospital, insisted upon being Jim's exclusive physician, and he had good news when the X-rays and tests were completed. Not one really serious problem outstanding in the overall picture. Jim would fully recover his voice and there would only be a crease, hardly noticeable, in his neck where the bullet had entered. In the back of his head where the bullet had made its exit, the hair had been shaved and the hole probed, but it too, would heal and the hair would grow back to cover the spot.

The bullet was examined by the police lab to make sure it came from the gun of Larry Brown, lying in the same hospital with multiple wounds of the stomach and legs.

That first afternoon out of intensive care, Catherine fed Jim, slowly, his first glass of juice which he was able to swallow. It tasted like the nectar of the gods.

The hospital priest came in to see him and Joked a little.

"I'm glad I didn't have to administer the last rites yesterday," he said.

Jim smiled and nodded.

"Would you like me to pray with you?"

Jim shook his head and pointed to Catherine.

"I guess he means that I've already done your job, Father," said Cass. The priest laughed and then his face turned sober.

"I'm going to look in on Larry Brown. He's the man who shot you, Jim. Maybe he needs me more right now than you do."

Stakeout Policeman Is Shot Thwarting W. Phila. Holdup

Continued From Page 1-B

Commissioner Joseph O'Neill and Mayor Frank Rizzo visit McGrath at Misericordia.

Also at the hospital were McGrath's wife of 27 years, Katherine, and the policeman's 26-year-old son, James Jr., who is a highway patrolman.

"McGrath and I were kids together," O'Neill said. "We grew up in downtown Philadelphia . . . He's a good policeman."

The commissioner said McGrath had been on the force 18 years "and was the original 'granny'" — a stake-out policeman who dresses as a woman to bait potential muggers.

"McGrath made a lot of arrests as a granny and was hurt a lot of times," O'Neill said.

Mrs. McGrath said she expected her husband to return to duty after recovery.

"That's his life," she said. "He will go back. That's what he wants, and I want what he wants."

McGrath's policeman son, the oldest of two sons, said he was in high school when his father joined the "Granny Detail."

"I took a lot of ribbing, my father being dressed like a

JAMES McGRATH
... on stakeout

LARRY BROWN
... robbery suspect

woman," he said. "But it's hard to follow in my father's footsteps."

At the hospital, Mayor Rizzo was angry.

"I was over here the other day to visit another policeman who was shot," the mayor said. "If it wasn't for these dedicated group of guys (policemen), this city wouldn't last five seconds."

CHAPTER 1

Larry Brown, Larry Brown, Larry Brown, the name spun a tired groove in his head. Larry Brown was the reason he lay here, helpless, weak, ineffectual for the first time in his life. Larry Brown was the bastard who preyed on the people, who stole, who shot cops, but Larry Brown now lay close to death with a ruptured spleen and several feet of intestines removed. The priest was going to comfort this creep who had almost robbed him of his life. He was suffering now, more than Jim - so let the priest comfort him and "leave him to heaven" for his judgment.

Larry Brown survived and Jim was in the courtroom during the entire trial. The suspect was confined to his wheelchair, hardly weighed seventy-five pounds, with legs like matchsticks and several of the eight bullets which could not be removed still lodged in vital areas of his body. He had to be taken out of the court room to be catheterized every half hour during the trial and although he was convicted and sentenced, he never served a day in jail. He would rot away slowly, confined forever, not to prison bars, but to his wheelchair.

"I liked it better that way," said Jim later. "When people see him, dying in that chair, they might think twice before they waste another cop - or anyone else. In jail, he would probably be free in a short time, on parole."

Jim was depressed. It was difficult to keep from talking and it took so much time to write the simplest request on paper. Also, he was uneasy. He couldn't exactly pinpoint the problem. Sure, he was flat on his back, he was weak, but he knew he would soon be O.K., the medical bills were being taken care of and so were Cass and the boys, but it was as if the sword of Damocles were hanging over him. Was it really ordinary procedure to have a stake-out man in his room on eight hour shifts twenty-four hours a day? Most of the stake-out men assigned to him were his buddies and they did their best to cheer him up, but they did not dare to tell him the real reason for their strict around the clock surveillance.

Jim was sustained on juice and milk that second day, but, since he was given, as a matter of routine, the hospital menu, his buddies who were guarding him, ordered with wolfish abandon everything which was edible.

Jim was not allowed to laugh anymore than he was allowed to speak, but his blue eyes lit with amusement each time a tray was delivered and the man on duty ate with relish. Obviously the food at Misericordia was very good

Jim was uneasy however because his intuition told him something was wrong. When he woke up the next morning, he was in a different room, and another stake-out man was with him.

"Am I nuts?" asked Jim, "or isn't this a different room than I was in yesterday?"

"You're not nuts, Jim, it is a different room, but it's nothing - just hospital procedure They moved you during the night and you didn't even wake up."

"Wow! They must have given me something heavy; but why in the middle of the night?"

"They needed the room. It was nearer to the nurse's station and this guy had to have more care than you. You're getting better, Jim". It was true, he was getting better, for Dr. McLaughlin, who popped in several times a day to look at the wound, ask questions, and check the chart, had given him permission to speak on this third day in the hospital. There was no noticeable difference in Jim's voice and he was only too happy to relinquish the pad and pencil. Cass did most of the nursing, relieving the already overburdened staff, but the sisters came in every day and directed the cleaning of the room, until everything was spotless.

CHAPTER 1

Jim and Cass began to enjoy all the people who came to visit along with bouquets of flower sent by Mrs. Rizzo, judges, and city officials. The mail, carefully scrutinized by the police, was given to him already opened, to insure the fact that he would see no crank letters.

Jim's good friend, Marvin Ralph, had sent a basket of fruit.

"How did you like the fruit, Jim?" asked Marvin over the phone.

"What fruit? I never got any fruit from you. I couldn't eat it anyway. I only drink liquids."

"You could take it home; what do you mean you never got it? It was sent out the first day you were in the hospital."

"You lying cheap-skate," joked Jim. "I'll bet you never sent it at all."

Upon investigation, it was revealed that a priest, Father James McGrath, in the same hospital, on another floor, had been the recipient of the well-stocked basket.

"Well, don't take it away from him," said Jim, when he was told. "The poor man probably figures It was sent by his parishioners,"

When notified, the store which had sent the basket, delivered another to Jim at no extra charge.

There was much joking and light-hearted ribbing, but Jim was still uneasy. He felt an undercurrent of anxiety and secrecy which did not sit well with him.

Jim had been moved to another room during the second night of his stay in the hospital, stealthily, because the threats upon his life were increasing and that day two black youths were picked up who had no reason for being on the floor assigned to Jim. Now his room number became an absolute secret and he and his family were kept constantly under guard.

At the end of the third day they removed the intravenous from Jim's hand which was swollen to three times its normal size and there was a steady stream of pinkish fluid which ran out of the side of his mouth and bothered him.

It was worth it though, he thought then, because Larry Brown would be convicted. It wouldn't be one of those things where you keep a suspect in jail for six hours prior to his preliminary hearing and the bastard didn't even have to tell you his right name during those six hours and then he beats it and jumps right out of your collar. That's why the Granny work was so satisfying; there were one hundred per cent convictions. Here was the goddam bugger with his hands on you, on your purse and you had him right there with the goods. He was breaking in Mike Lutz who was younger and a little faster than Jim. Mike was a good kid, had the natural makings of a Granny. Mike would know how good it felt to be in court when the guy was convicted and the judge would even ask how long he wanted the bum sent up for. Of course, Jim never answered that question, but they got their sentences. They didn't wriggle out of those collars.

He slept so much; he never slept much. A catnap now and then, going into the hole during the cold winter months when he was a rookie on the beat, but never more than a few hours during the night. He was not a sleeper.

Now, maybe it was the medication, but he dreamed a lot

CHAPTER 1

He was back in the old neighborhood, South Philly, St. Edmund's School, playing sandlot baseball with the kids. Second base was his favorite spot and he was a hitter! Lookit the ball go, Jimmy McGrath hit a homer!

His dream changed, melted, dissolved, came alive again. Now he was working for the butcher on the corner, what was his name -Mike, something. He couldn't remember the name, in his dream, but he could see the small store with sawdust on the floor and huge sides of beef hanging on hooks. Mike could sure go at that meat with his cleaver and assortment of sharp knives to carve out steaks, pork chops, and roasts. There were white porcelain cases and it was part of Jim's Job to clean them out every day and to do the deliveries. He got good tips most of the time. A dime was usual, but Mrs. McGlinchey would always give him a quarter! Old man Feeney would never give him a cent, but he had to act polite anyway because he was Hugh McGrath's son and Hugh McGrath was the Republican committeeman in the neighborhood and everybody knew him. Even Austin Meehan sometimes came to supper and it was "Hanging Judge" McDevitt who later got his dad the job as court crier so that he could support the family in those depression days.

Slowly, carefully, he saved up the money for his bike, a shiny, red bike and how he rode. Now the deliveries were easier and he could go farther and faster - faster!

A white clad nurse cut off his dream -woke him to eat his first meal in four days at the hospital. He was given soft boiled eggs, buttered toast with the crust trimmed and, best of all, a strong cup of coffee. He got it all down and when Dr. McLaughlin came in, he surprised Jim by telling him that he could go home that very day.

"You're O.K., Jim," said McLaughlin, "and you don't really need to stay on here. Come back and see me in three days and we'll check again, but I really feel that everything will be fine."

It was a little soon to send him home, thought McLaughlin, but he'll be much safer there. At least nobody knows where he lives, and the hospital is still too public.

He was unbelievably weak, so a wheelchair was made ready, Cass helped him dress and he was discharged. He shook hands with Dr. McLaughlin, waved to the nurses and the sisters, received their good wishes, their blessings and left in the waiting unmarked stake-out car.

He noticed, on the way home, that there was a stake-out truck behind them and when they left that particular precinct, another truck would pick up and there was someone behind them all the way to his own doorstep.

"O.K., Bill," he said at last, "what's up?"

"Well, Jim, you might as well know," said his driver, "some goons threatened to kill you."

Cass turned white and clung to Jim's arm.

"Well, at least I know," said Jim, "I thought something funny was going on."

A big sign was taped to the large picture window of the living room. It read, WELCOME HOME JIM, in red, white and blue coloring.

"The kids did that," said Cass, "all the kids in the neighborhood - and they're waiting for you. You're a big hero to them."

CHAPTER 1

They were there all right, about fifteen or twenty of them and they wouldn't go away until Jim came downstairs, propped up in his pajamas and robe, resting his swollen hand on a pillow, greeted them and accepted their good wishes. He couldn't let them down, but he was aching to be alone. The trip had tired him. After about twenty minutes, Cass, sweetly but firmly, told the kids that Jim had to go upstairs to sleep.

In his own bed at last, he still noticed the pinkish stains on the pillow case and he remembered, could not stop himself, this time, from remembering - all the way back to the time when he was eight years old.

Mother, at the end, when she was thin and frail from childbearing and hard work, coughed up pink fluid on her pillow. Even if Dad did say it was just a cold and nothing to worry about, young Jim felt in his bones that it just wasn't the truth. In the height of the bitter depression, with six children to raise, Alice McGrath knew for certain that she was ill with a sickness which had no end, except in death.

The worst time of Jim's life was when they took his mother away, and he never saw her again.

Hugh McGrath was determined to keep his family together. In the little row house on Ringgold Street, in South Philadelphia, he became a Republican committeeman, which brought him to the notice of Sheriff Austin Meehan and Graham, the ward leader.

After a friendly dinner or two with Judge Carrol and "Hanging Judge" McDevitt, Hugh got a job in City Hall as a tipstaff, where he kept order in room #336.

Eight year old James had a passion; the movies, especially cowboy movies. What a thrill it was to run, dime in hand, down to the Point Breeze Theatre and see Tom Mix, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and all the others in their wide white hats, galloping on brave stallions to save a town, a bank or a girl who was having trouble with one of the bad guys. You always knew the bad guys because they wore black and snarled, but the good guys wore white and they smiled a lot.

Jim loved the good guys and his heart always beat faster when they shot it out with the others and won. Some day, when he grew up, he was going to be one of the good guys and shoot at the bad ones and make them sorry for causing trouble.

The McGrath family heard the news about Pearl Harbor on the radio when they returned from church that Sunday in December and Jim's only thought was to enlist in the Navy and fight the bad guys. He was too young, though, only sixteen and still in school. He didn't wait long. Just after classes were over in June, one month before his seventeenth birthday, Jim, with his father's permission, said goodbye to his girl, Catherine Green, and joined the Navy.